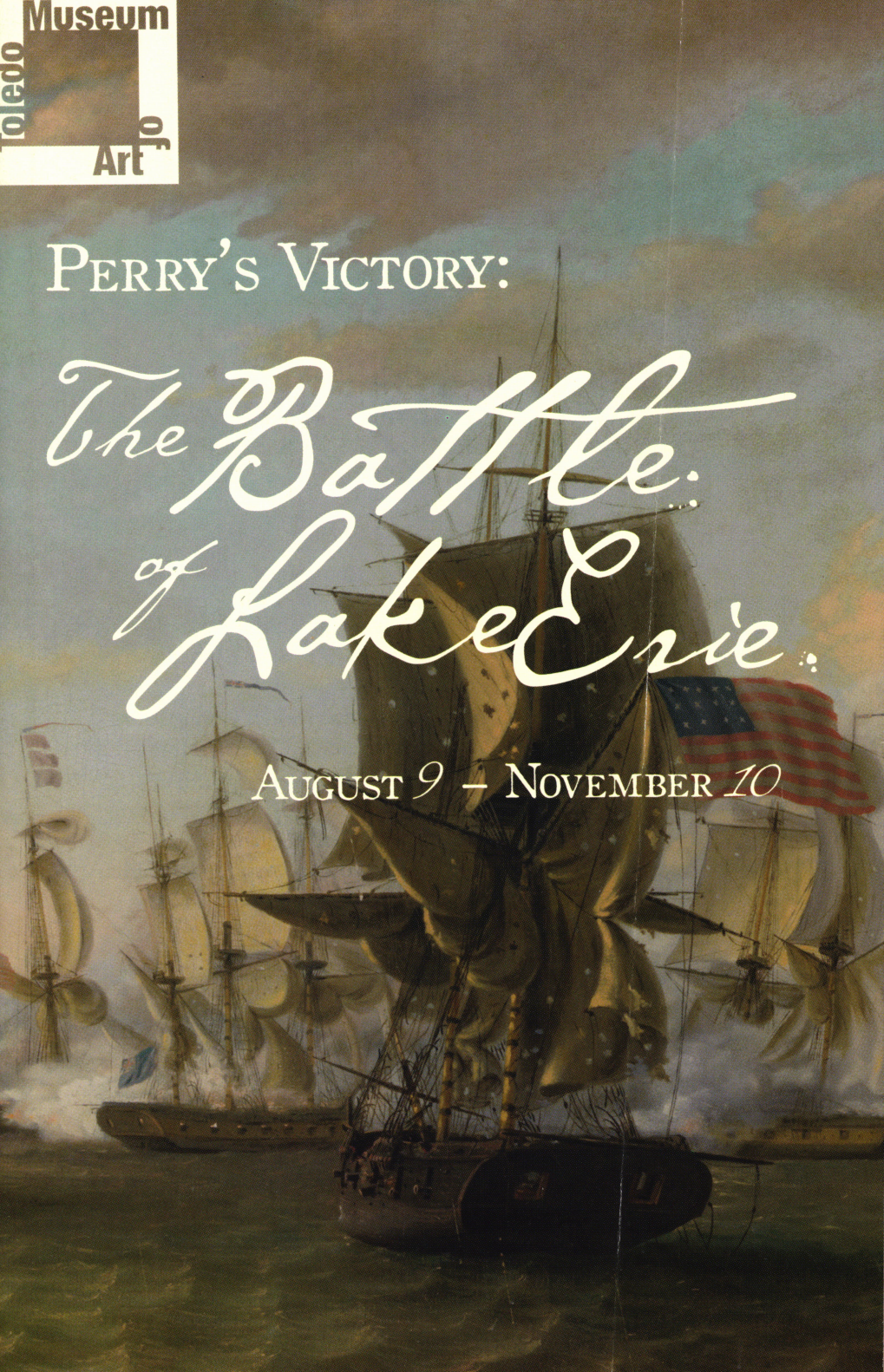


PERRY'S VICTORY:

*The Battle  
of Lake Erie.*

AUGUST 9 – NOVEMBER 10





*"We have met the enemy,  
and they are ours..."*

**T**his exhibition commemorates the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie (September 10, 1813), one of the largest naval battles of the War of 1812 and one of the most famous victories in American history. The battle was won when Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (1785–1819) and his nine U.S. vessels captured a British Royal Navy squadron of six ships near Put-in-Bay, giving the United States control of the lake and its important transportation routes. After the battle, Perry wrote to Maj. Gen. William Henry Harrison what has become one of the most famous messages in military history: "We have met the enemy, and they are ours, two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop."

As soon as news of Perry's victory reached the public, there was an immediate demand for images of the battle and of Perry himself. Perry became an instant hero, whose portraits provided inspiration for the American people and, as one contemporary wrote, showed Perry to be "... worthy of their imitation, and handing down to posterity the deeds of an individual, illustrious in their nature, noble in principles, and glorious in their consequences."







# THE WAR OF 1812

Sometimes referred to as the Second War of Independence, the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain (along with a federation of American Indians allied with the British) was a reaction to British interference with American sovereignty. The main offenses were trade restrictions; attacks on American vessels; forcing at least 6,000 American merchant sailors into service in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars; and the likely British role in encouraging Indians in the northwestern frontier to rebel against American expansion.

## *Some important events:*

### 1812

June 18	U.S. declares war on Great Britain
August 18/19	U.S. General William Hull surrenders <i>Detroit</i>
August 19	<i>USS Constitution</i> (commanded by Isaac Hull) defeats HMS <i>Guerrière</i> —first major naval battle of the war
December 29	<i>USS Constitution</i> (commanded by Bainbridge) defeats <i>HMS Java</i>

### 1813

January 22/23	Battle of Frenchtown/River Raisin Massacre (in present-day Monroe, Michigan)
April 27	American troops sack York (now Toronto); Brigadier General Zebulon Pike killed
May 1–9	First siege of Fort Meigs (in present-day Perrysburg, Ohio)



June 1	<i>HMS Shannon</i> defeats <i>USS Chesapeake</i> ; Captain James Lawrence utters last words: "Don't give up the ship" (Perry puts this on his battle flag)
July 21–28	Second siege of Fort Meigs
August 1–2	Attack on Fort Stephenson (in present-day Fremont, Ohio)
September 10	<b>The Battle of Lake Erie (off Put-in-Bay, Ohio)</b>
October 5	Battle of the Thames (near present-day Chatham, Ontario); Shawnee chief Tecumseh killed

## 1814

August	Peace negotiations begin at Ghent, Belgium
August 24/25	British troops burn Washington, D.C.
September 13/14	Battle of Baltimore at Fort McHenry; Francis Scott Key pens "The Star-spangled Banner"
December 24	American and British delegates sign the Treaty of Ghent

## 1815

January 8	Andrew Jackson defeats the British at the Battle of New Orleans
February	Congress ratifies the Treaty of Ghent; President Monroe declares the war over





## COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

Born August 23, 1785 Oliver Hazard Perry was the eldest of eight children born to Navy officer Christopher Perry and Sarah Wallace Alexander. One of his brothers was Matthew C. Perry (1794–1858), famous for opening Japan to the West. At 14 Perry entered naval service as a midshipman aboard the *General Greene*, commanded by his father. He was made lieutenant in 1807. On May 5, 1811 he married 20-year-old Elizabeth Champlin Mason, with whom he had five children (one died in infancy). With the War of 1812 he was promoted to master commandant, then later to captain. After the war he was raised to the rank of commodore.

The common view of his September 10, 1813 victory in the Battle of Lake Erie was that it was achieved through “the courage and obstinacy of one man.” Thereafter Perry became known as the “Hero of Lake Erie” and was celebrated above all other soldiers and sailors of the war.



After the war, Perry battled pirates in the Second Barbary War, during which a fight with another officer resulted in both being court-martialed. To diffuse the scandal of a national hero being reprimanded by the Navy, President James Monroe sent Perry on what was to be his final assignment: a diplomatic mission to Venezuela. On his return, he contracted yellow fever and died on August 23, 1819, his 34th birthday.

## THE PORTRAIT

After his victory at the Battle of Lake Erie, Commodore Perry became a nationally beloved figure whose image was in high demand. The Toledo Museum of Art's oil painting by Gilbert and Jane Stewart remains one of the most famous portraits of Perry.

A full-length portrait of Perry, a Rhode Island native, was commissioned from Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) by the General Assembly of Rhode Island in June 1818. It was never carried out. Perry did sit for Stuart for a bust-length portrait, possibly one requested by publisher Joseph Delaplaine for his book *Repository of the Lives and Portraits of Distinguished Americans*. A letter exists from Delaplaine complaining that Stuart had not yet finished the portrait. In fact, Stuart was notorious for leaving works unfinished and had completed only Perry's head at the time of his death in 1828. Stuart's 16-year-old daughter Jane completed the sky, body, and uniform of the portrait.

Gilbert Stuart was one of early America's master portrait artists, today best known for his portraits of George Washington (including the one used for the one dollar bill). His distinctive style, emulated by the next generation of portraitists, earned him the title "Father of American Portraiture." Jane Stuart (1812–1888) had essentially grown up in her father's studio, helping him with chores like grinding pigments, while absorbing the lessons he gave to his students. She had some success as a painter in her own right, but when her father died deeply in debt, leaving an estate valued at only \$375, Jane painted copies of her father's paintings to sell, particularly his portraits of Washington, in order to raise money for her family.



# THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

Despite the battle's importance to the war and the heavy casualties (American losses: 27 killed and 96 wounded; British losses: 41 killed and 92 wounded), the Battle of Lake Erie was fought and won in a matter of a few hours.

**September 10, 1813** Early in the morning, a lookout spots the British ships on the horizon. Perry's fleet, anchored near West Sister Island in Lake Erie, sets sail.

- Perry hoists his battle flag ("Don't give up the ship") to the topmast as the battle seems imminent
- 11:45 the first shots are fired from the long range cannons
- By 2:00 Perry's flagship the *Lawrence* has received heavy damage from the relentless attacks from the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*
- Around 2:30, Perry turns command of the *Lawrence* over to Lt. John J. Yarnell and leaves in a small boat with his battle flag and a small crew for the *Niagara*, where he takes command
- Perry quickly moves the *Niagara* between the *Lady Prevost* and *Chippewa* on the left and the *Detroit* that had collided with the *Queen Charlotte* on the right. Perry fires weapons from both sides of the *Niagara*, inflicting great damage to the already damaged British ships
- Between 2:50 and 3:00 the battle is finished with the surrender of the British forces
- Perry returns to the damaged *Lawrence* to receive the surrender of the British Commodore Robert Barclay
- Not long after the battle is over Perry writes this message to the Secretary of the Navy William Jones:



U.S. Brig Niagara off the Coast

Sister Is., Head of Lake Erie, Sept 10, 1813

4 p.m.

Sir:

It has pleased the Almighty to give to the arms of the United States a signal victory over their enemies on this Lake—the British squadron consisting of two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop have this moment surrendered to the force under my command, after a sharp conflict.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant

O. J. Perry



# A MONUMENTAL PAINTING

Thomas Birch (1779–1851), America's first professional painter of maritime scenes, emigrated from London to Philadelphia in 1794. His depictions of naval engagements of the War of 1812 were widely known through engravings snapped up by Americans eager for prints celebrating the new nation's military triumphs. Birch's stylistic fusion of precise, accurate ship depictions and the emotional appeal inherent in the violence and destruction of battle drew praise in Philadelphia from collectors, critics, and fellow artists. At the time he was considered to have no equal in the field of marine painting.

This canvas, heroically scaled at 5 feet by 8 feet, was begun within a few weeks of news of the victory. Birch took pains to make sure the scene was as accurate as possible, consulting Perry himself through a representative. It was first exhibited at the *Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Columbian Society of Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy* in May 1814, where nearly ten percent of the works were devoted to images of the war; half of those depicted the Battle of Lake Erie. The catalogue





for that exhibition states that the painting, “represents the moment in which Commodore Perry on board the *Niagara* is engaging the ship *Queen Charlotte*, after compelling the ship *Detroit* and schooner *Lady Prevost* to strike their colors.”

The largest ship in the foreground, hull battered and sails full of holes, is Perry’s flagship the *Lawrence*, which he had left to board the *Niagara*. Although Perry had won the battle aboard the *Niagara*, he accepted Captain Robert Barclay’s surrender on the deck of the wrecked *Lawrence* to show the British the price he had paid for victory.



Opposite page: Thomas Birch (American, born England, 1779–1851), *Perry's Victory on Lake Erie*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 66" x 96 1/2". Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Gift of Mrs. C.H.A.Esling.

Left: Detail of *Perry's Victory on Lake Erie*; the most prominent ship, on the left, is the British ship *Detroit*. The *Niagara* is in the center background, flying the American flag.



# THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBITION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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*For details and more events, visit [toledomuseum.org](http://toledomuseum.org)*

- August 16** Gallery Talk: *Perry's Victory*. Led by exhibition curator Ed Hill. Meet in Libbey Court. 7 p.m.
- August 30** Tall Ships Film Series: *Master and Commander* (2003, 137 min.). 7 p.m. Little Theater
- September 6** Tall Ships Film Series: *Persuasion* (1995, 103 min.). 7 p.m. Little Theater
- September 10** Perry's Victory Party. 6:30–8:30 p.m. Main Museum
- September 12** Presentation: Native Americans in the War of 1812. Jamie Oxendine of the Black Swamp Intertribal Foundation. 7:30 p.m. Little Theater
- September 14** Performance: Music from the War of 1812. Students from the School of Music at Ohio State University. 3 p.m. Location TBA
- October 11** Presentation: Consequences of the Battle of Lake Erie. David Skaggs, professor emeritus, Bowling Green State University. 7:30 p.m. Great Gallery
- November 8** Great Performances in the Great Gallery: Celebrating Heroes of the War of 1812. Christopher Scholl, Bowling Green State University. 7:30 p.m. Great Gallery

## UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

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*Fresh Impressions: Early Modern Japanese Prints*

October 4, 2013–January 1, 2014. Canaday Gallery

*The Art of the Louvre's Tuileries Garden*

February 13–May 11, 2014. Canaday Gallery

*The Art of Video Games*

June 19–September 28, 2014. Canaday Gallery

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Cover: Thomas Birch (American, born England, 1779–1851), *Perry's Victory on Lake Erie* (detail), 1814. Oil on canvas, 66" x 96 1/2". Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Gift of Mrs. C.H.A. Esling.